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REPLY...

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A REPLY

to

M^R. CHARLES INGERSOLL'S

"LETTER TO A FRIEND IN A SLAVE STATE."

BY

M. RUSSELL THAYER.

PHILADELPHIA:

JOHN CAMPBELL, PUBLISHER,

419 CHESTNUT STREET.

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“Among the advantages of a confederate republic, enumerated by Montesquieu, an important one is, that should a popular insurrection happen in one of the states, the others are able to quell it. Should abuses creep into one part, they are reformed by those that remain sound.”

JAMES MADISON.

“According to the degree of pleasure and pride we feel in being republicans, ought to be our zeal in cherishing the spirit and supporting the character of federalists.”

JAMES MADISON.

“That there may happen cases in which the national government may be under the necessity of resorting to force, cannot be denied. Our own experience has corroborated the lessons taught by the examples of other nations, that emergencies of this sort will sometimes exist in all societies however constituted. Should such emergencies at any time happen under the national government, there could be no remedy but force. The means to be employed must be proportioned to the extent of the mischief.

“An insurrection, whatever may be its cause, eventually endangers all government.”

ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

MY DEAR SIR:

I have read attentively your late "Letter to a Friend in a Slave State," and have experienced some pleasure from the sprightliness of the style, the copiousness of the illustration, and the vigor which characterizes the greater part of the performance. Indeed, I may frankly say, that to my mind, it is the best of the Secession pamphlets which have as yet issued from our Northern press. You have not employed your time amid the convulsions which shake our unhappy country, and in the presence of the most important events which have transpired in the world since the downfall of Buonaparte, in criticising the rhetorical inelegancies of official dispatches, or stooped to the invidious office of sneering at the President and his "social meridian," or ridiculing the names of his subordinates. Your work, such as it is, has a higher aim, and has been performed in a more manly manner. This excellence I willingly accord it,—that its attack upon the Government of your country, if ill-timed and unpatriotic, is at any rate fearless and open. If unjust and pernicious, it is at least dignified and decorous. If breathing the spirit of the political partisan, it nevertheless does not descend to subjects unworthy of the reflections of the patriot.

The merits to which I have alluded entitle you to a reply. While they render the views which you hold only the more insidious and dangerous to the public mind, they,

for that very reason, furnish me with a sufficient apology for making that reply.

It was observed by archdeacon Paley, in his *Horæ Paulinæ*, that amidst the obscurities, the silence, or the contradiction of history, if a Letter can be found, we regard it as the discovery of a landmark by which we can correct, adjust, or supply the imperfections and uncertainties of other accounts. The future historian of the United States, if in his researches his eye should fall upon your Letter, will, I fear, be in some doubt in regard to the landmark which you have left by the roadside of the present time. While he will observe that you proclaim yourself the friend of the Union, he will at the same time perceive that your talents are chiefly devoted to an elaborate apology for the traitors who vainly attempt to destroy it; he will remark, that while you concede that the war forced upon the Government by the insurrection at the South is an unavoidable necessity, you at the same time denounce the Government for prosecuting it; that while in your latest sentence you express yourself in favor of carrying on the war, you at the same time labor to prove that it is hopeless in its objects and ruinous in its results—that while you counsel conciliation and compromise, you yet steadfastly declare your belief that “the government at Richmond will not listen to any terms of arrangement which the North could, would, or ought to enter into.” Under embarrassments so great, the future chronicler of the times may well put down your pages in despair, and seek to adjust his difficulties by other standards.

The key to these glaring inconsistencies into which you have fallen, is not difficult to be found. The cause is too bad to be benefited by your skill. You dare not defend the Southern treason upon the Southern argument. You could not defend it upon any other. The origin and motives of this rebellion are so clearly written in the history

of the past, and are so well understood by the people of Pennsylvania, that you could not undertake the arduous task of justifying it. You must therefore extenuate it. Your sense of justice, too, I may add, would not allow you wholly to condemn the war which is waged in defence of the Union and the Constitution. At the same time your dislike to the Administration to which the government of the country has been confided by the people, is so strong, and your anxiety in reference to the political results of "the next Congressional election" to which you refer, so great, that old prejudices have for the time triumphed over patriotic impulse; and justice, reason and the truth of history, have alike been compelled to give way before the exactions of party spirit. True, the war has been forced upon the Government; but Mr. Lincoln administers the Government; the Government must be condemned at all hazards, and therefore the war must be condemned.

You declare in your Letter to your friend in a Slave State, with a confidence which your sincerity may perhaps pardon, that the views which you promulgate are the opinions of the people of Pennsylvania. Have you forgotten that the people of Pennsylvania voted by an overwhelming majority for Mr. Lincoln, whose political principles you arraign? Is it within your knowledge that Pennsylvania has sent to the war a larger force than any other State, and that every man of them is a volunteer? You cannot be ignorant of the fact that she has contributed already more than 100,000 men for the defence of the Government. Are you aware that her Legislature has formally approved of the war, and pledged the State and its resources to its vigorous prosecution?* You have not been an inattentive observer of the spirit which animates her people. You cannot have forgotten their indignant

* Resolutions of 18th April, 1861, and 24th January, 1861.

attitude as they sprang to arms after the insult of the 13th of April. You must have witnessed the anxiety with which their eyes have followed the flag of their country amid the smoke and carnage of battle, the joy which has followed in the wake of victory, the gloom which has succeeded every reverse. Is this the posture, and are these the signs of a people who sympathize with the enemies of their country? By what warrant, then, do you impute to the people of this State the sentiments conveyed in your letter to your Southern friend? It was by such misrepresentations of public sentiment at the North that the conspirators at Washington, who planned the rebellion, were enabled at the outset to impose upon the credulity of the South, and to plunge them into this disastrous war.

But before I proceed to notice more particularly some of the topics upon which you discourse at much length in your letter, I must be indulged in one or two observations of a general character. In the first place, your attack upon the existing Government of the country must, I think, strike all candid men as being exceedingly ill-timed and unpatriotic at the present moment. Whatever, in your opinion, may be the faults of that Government, you are aware that it is now engaged in putting down a most formidable insurrection against the laws. This great object tasks all its resources and demands all its energies. For this purpose it labors day and night with unceasing activity. In the pursuit of this object, disregarding the lines which have hitherto defined political organizations, it has appointed to posts of honor and responsibility many distinguished men of your own party. Is it a proper time, then, I may be allowed to ask, to endeavor to revive political animosities? Is it the part of patriotism to seek to sow disaffection to the Government, to destroy its efficiency, and to embarrass its operations when traitors are in the

field? I know not how it may appear to you, but by the people of Pennsylvania the business in which you have embarked will, I think, be regarded in a light which will bring neither glory to you nor satisfaction to themselves.

There are times of trial in the history of every nation, eventful periods, in which its strength is tried, and upon which hangs the very question of its national existence; periods in which its integrity is threatened by external force, or in which the elements of internal disorder are let loose to upturn the foundations of the State. At such times it would seem to be the part of patriotism to stand by the Government, to forget for the time all minor differences of opinion, to overlook faults (for administrations, which are but men, must sometimes err), to lay aside the prejudices of party, and to give our best energies to the assistance of the Government in maintaining the common weal. Such a period has now arrived in the history of the country. The very fact of our national existence is the question in issue. It is not our fault that the method of trial is the ordeal of battle. It is now to be determined, not only for ourselves, but for those who are to come after us, whether our Constitution is a band of steel or a wisp of hay; whether the plan of Government framed for the people of the United States, with so much care and deliberation, by the venerated assembly in which your ancestor sat, is a plan which combines strength with utility, or whether its first severe trial is to prove the worthlessness of their work. In a word, the question is, can we preserve the benign and free Government transmitted to us by our fathers, or shall it be thrown down by insurrectionary violence. At such a time, who are the Greeks upon the Circus benches while the enemy is at the gates, they who support the Government, or they who find amusement in exposing its faults? Surely,

if at such a time absolute neutrality is not a virtue, active sympathy with the enemy is something less.

There is another feature in your performance which requires a preliminary remark. An effort plainly appears to disparage one section of your country. You dwell with especial pleasure upon the intolerance and bigotry of New England. You recount with much minuteness of detail the opposition of Massachusetts to the War of 1812. You linger long around the famous Hartford Convention, and you invoke afresh those ghosts of former contests, the Personal Liberty Bills of the East. You do not advert to the fact, that Pennsylvania too had her Personal Liberty Bill, and always has had since her celebrated declaration of 1780.* New England requires no defence at my hands.

* "When we contemplate our abhorrence of that condition to which the arms and tyranny of Great Britain were exerted to reduce us, when we look back upon the variety of dangers to which we have been exposed, and how miraculously our wants in many instances have been supplied, and our deliverance wrought when even hope and human fortitude have become unequal to the conflict, we are unavoidably led to a serious and grateful sense of the manifold blessings which we have undeservedly received from the hand of that Being from whom every good and perfect gift cometh. Impressed with these ideas, we conceive that it is our duty, and we rejoice that it is in our power, to extend a portion of that freedom to others, which hath been extended to us, and release them from that state of thraldom to which we ourselves were tyrannically doomed, and from which we have now every prospect of being delivered. It is not for us to inquire why, in the creation of mankind, the inhabitants of the several parts of the earth, were distinguished by a difference in feature or complexion. It is sufficient to know, that all are the work of an Almighty Hand. We find in the distribution of the human species that the most fertile as well as the most barren parts of the earth are inhabited by men of complexions different from ours, and from each other; from whence we may reasonably as well as religiously infer, that He who placed them in their various situations, hath extended equally His care and protection to all, and that it becometh not us to counteract

It is, as we all know, the home of virtue, of intelligence, and of law. Her commerce, and the patient industry of her sons has filled her homes with thrifty happiness, and the world with the products of her ingenious toil. Her hand has ever been ready in the cause of human progress ; her foot ever foremost in the march of freedom. She was first at Lexington in 1775. She was first at Baltimore in 1861. She was at Yorktown in 1781. She is at Yorktown in 1862. It was not my lot to have been born upon the soil of New England. On the contrary I may state, if it will at all recommend me to your esteem, that, although I do not, like your correspondent, reside in a Slave State, I was born in one, and in that one which you appear to fear may be supplanted in the affections of Pennsylvania by Massachusetts. But there are in Pennsylvania, many descendants of New England families. Our northern tier of counties was, as you know, settled by New England people, and many of the most illustrious citizens of the town we live in were, as you are aware, natives of New England, or the sons of such. You are yourself, if I am correctly informed, lineally removed, but by a single generation, from a distinguished Connecticut ancestry. Virginia is not the enemy of Massachusetts. They have

His mercies. We esteem it a peculiar blessing granted to us, that we are enabled this day to add one more step to universal civilization, by removing as much as possible the sorrows of those, who have lived in undeserved bondage, and from which, by the assumed authority of the Kings of Great Britain, no effectual legal relief could be obtained. Weaned by a long course of experience from those narrow prejudices and partialities we had imbibed, we find our hearts enlarged with kindness and benevolence towards men of all conditions and nations, and we conceive ourselves at this particular period, extraordinarily called upon, by the blessings which we have received, to manifest the sincerity of our profession, and to give a substantial proof of our gratitude."—*Preamble to Act 1 March, 1780, abolishing Slavery in Pennsylvania.*

been friends in many a contest. Virginia stands in no need of your praise, or Massachusetts of mine. We should be proud to be citizens of a country which embraces them both, and inheritors of a history which both have made famous by deeds of virtue, magnanimity, and valor. Why then should the present opportunity be embraced to arouse sectional antipathies, to decry one extremity of the Union, or to express invidious preferences for another? The struggle we are engaged in is for the common benefit. The men of Massachusetts are shoulder to shoulder with the men of Pennsylvania in the field. The blood of Winthrop mingles with that of Greble on the plains of Hampton. Loyal men everywhere are astir. From the Cumberland to the St. Croix they swarm to the support of the Constitution and the Union. Shall we who stay at home follow them with our prayers and blessings, with words of cheer and kindly deeds, or shall we seek to sow distrust, dislike, and dissension at home, while they, amid privation and death, maintain the flag on hardfought fields?

But to come now to the main topic of your discourse. Its aim, as you declare it, is to show that conciliation should be the policy of the Government; or, as you put it in another place, "The question for the country is, war or compromise?" Let it be borne in mind that the question is not who is to blame for the war, though that is not a question admitting of any doubt, although you vainly attempt to transfer the guilt from the true conspirators to imaginary ones. But the question is, whether the rebellion shall be put down by force of arms, or whether we shall trust to offers of conciliation to effect it. You advocate the latter opinion, and to sustain it, you endeavor to prove that the triumph of the Federal arms, and the restoration of law, order, and the Constitution in the Southern States, are impossibilities. You do not, it is true, suggest any terms of compromise yourself, or say to whom they are to be pro-

posed. You declare the opinion that no terms which could be offered, would be accepted by what you call "the government at Richmond." To whom then are the terms of compromise to be offered? To the people? They are powerless. They are fast bound in the chains of a military tyranny. It would be as much as the life of any one of them is worth to speak of the possibility of any compromise which would embrace the idea of Federal union. The only people in the South who have it in their power to entertain your offers, are at Yorktown, at Corinth, and similar places; but they are people with guns in their hands, living in curious places with mud walls around them, and looking out of windows that have no glass in them. Would you make your compromise resolutions to them? Try it. If you do, you will be referred to the chiefs of these interesting communities, who will refer you again to Richmond. But at Richmond, your game, as you admit, is blocked. You cannot move. Recognition or nothing; independence or the last ditch is there the only countersign which will enable you to pass. That this is true your argument admits, as indeed it could not but do, for they have themselves, in their mock Congress and rebel gatherings, expressly so defined their position.

But if you should succeed at last in finding any medium by which you could communicate your offers to the people, what is the compromise you would propose? You have not told us in your letter, and until you do, we have derived little benefit from your suggestion. Your attachment for the Union is so great that you certainly would propose no terms which would compromise the unity of the States. You could not of course expect any administration, even a Republican one, to do that. What then would you offer? Let us have your proposition. Speak out your "amicable adjustment." You are silent. You cannot

offer independence and division. You feel that there is nothing else worth offering. Yet you advise the President to write Conciliation and Compromise upon the colors of the Union. Your readers will probably doubt the efficacy of these fine phrases upon the enemy, unless indeed the colors are followed closely, as they now are, by Parrott and Dahlgren batteries.

It is too late and too early for conciliation. The time has past. The time has not come. As for compromise, if you intend by it the surrender of the principles of the Constitution, you must determine which is the best,—the Constitution maintained and established by war, or peace without the Constitution, and therefore without government, and therefore with war. It is idle to talk about the Constitution, and at the same time to propose to yield it up to traitors by conciliation. The Constitution cannot be preserved by conciliation against bayonets, cannon, and 300,000 soldiers. History teaches that under such circumstances as those in which we now find ourselves, force is the only safe conciliator; numbers, skill, and cannon, the only referees. For a Government to maintain its authority is the condition of the existence of its authority, and therefore of itself; or as it is tersely expressed by Sir James Mackintosh: "Every State must maintain its honor, because it is essential to its safety." Measures may be surrendered, principles of administration may be compromised, but a compromise of an established and invaded Constitution in the presence and under the duress of arms, is not a compromise but a surrender. It is insurrection victorious; that is, it is revolution.

The cases which you put from history are singularly infelicitous to your argument. It was no part of the Constitution of the Germanic Empire that Protestants should be burnt. It required no sacrifice of it therefore on the part of the Emperor that religious toleration should be ex-

tended to his subjects. George III lost his American colonies, not by enforcing the British Constitution, but by violating one of its fundamental principles, viz., that representation and taxation are reciprocal. James II was driven from the throne, not for defending the Constitution, but for conspiring against it. Napoleon Buonaparte ruined himself, not by adhering to the first principles of government, but by violating them. A compromise with his foreign enemies would have involved no violation of fixed principles, but a return to them. The Constitution of the United States was formed, it is true, by compromises ; but is it a corollary from that that it must be broken by compromises, or, in other words, that it is to be preserved by breaking it ?

The advice you give to the people of the United States is, to compromise in some unmentioned manner and upon some impossible terms (for you do not venture to hint at them), with bands of armed insurgents, who have plundered the public property, destroyed the peace and prosperity of the country, and slain and subjected to cruel torture many of its loyal citizens. Men who have set up a mock government, which they make the agent of their despotism; who have delegated a pretended authority to bands of desperate men to burn and destroy our ships ; who have slandered your Government in every court of Europe ; who have robbed the arsenals, the dock-yards, and the treasury ; who have called to their bloody work the savages of our Western frontier,* who boasted that they would burn Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, and call the roll of their slaves on the spot on which Warren fell. They are men who, driven from one cover to another by the soldiers

* Have you read the order of General Pike, thanking his savage allies for their *gallantry* in the battle of Pea Ridge ? If so, did you read what these Indians did at Pea Ridge ?

of the Union, still stand with arms in their hands defying the Government and the law, spreading desolation wherever they pass, and mingling the innocent and the guilty, the loyal and disloyal, in a common ruin. Such are the men in behalf of whom your sympathies are aroused, whose guilt you palliate, before whom you would throw down your arms, whom you would tempt to their duty by the empty sound of conciliation, and for whom you are content to denounce the constituted authorities of your country. What does it signify that many sincere persons in the South, led astray by the acts of designing men, uphold and maintain this course of conduct? This only shows that Yancey and his fellow-conspirators succeeded at last in their plans of "firing the Southern heart, and precipitating" their dupes into rebellion. Shall loyal men on that account give way to their insane fury, and suffer the Government to be torn down, or to have its heart eaten out by your nostrum of conciliation?

But you say the question is not between men, but between nations; and so says Jefferson Davis. I respectfully deny it. The Constitution is not a league between States, but a Government for the people. Such was its design in its origin. Such it is in the plan of its operation, and in the mode of its administration. Government implies the power of making laws. The laws of the United States are made not for the States, but for the people of the United States. The Constitution is not a Constitution made by States, but, as it declares, by the people of the United States. Says Mr. Madison, in the end of that able chapter recounting the failures of ancient confederacies: "Experience is the oracle of truth, and where its responses are unequivocal, they ought to be conclusive and sacred. The important truth which it unequivocally pronounces in the present case is, that a sovereignty over so-

vereigns, a government over governments, a legislation for communities, as contradistinguished from individuals; as it is a solecism in theory, so in practice it is subversive of the order and ends of civil polity.”* Says Mr. Hamilton in enumerating the advantages of the proposed Constitution over the system of the Confederation which preceded it: “The great and radical vice in the construction of the existing Confederation, is in the principle of legislation for States or Governments in their corporate or collective capacities, and as contradistinguished from the individuals of whom they consist;” and thence he proceeds to argue that by adopting the Constitution we will “incorporate into one plan those ingredients which may be considered as forming the characteristic difference between a league and a government,” and “extend the authority of the Union to the persons of the citizens—the only proper objects of government.”† And again, in a passage which is strikingly opposite to the present occasion: “However gross a heresy it may be to maintain that a party to a compact has a right to revoke that compact, the doctrine itself has had respectable advocates. *The possibility of a question of this nature proves the necessity of laying the foundations of our national Government deeper than in the mere sanction of delegated authority.* The fabric of American empire ought to rest on the solid basis of the consent of the people. The streams of national power ought to flow immediately from that pure, original fountain of all legitimate authority.”‡

The United States are engaged in a war not with States, but with armed bands of individuals who set the law at defiance. It does not a whit alter the fact that these individuals have obtained, in some States, the control of the local government, and use it for purposes hostile to the National Government. Still the war is against rebels, and

* Federalist, No. 20.

† Ib. No. 15.

‡ Ib. No. 22.

not against States. The Federal Government seeks no interference with the States, so long as they continue in their proper orbits. So long as their powers are exercised within the sphere of their legitimate influence, and not used by rebels to overthrow the Constitution of the people, they might administer their domestic affairs without interruption or hindrance from the General Government, as they have done for more than three-quarters of a century. But if their powers are seized upon by insurgents, and employed to overthrow the Constitution of the common government, their rights are in no wise infringed by preventing such a perversion of their powers, and by restraining such unconstitutional action. If, in order to do this, it is necessary to displace from their usurped power the agents who so wield it, who can lawfully complain of the action of the General Government? If it be true, as the Constitution declares in its Sixth Article, that this Constitution is the supreme law of the land, what other law shall be allowed to override it? Have the people ordained a government with no means of preserving it, or a supreme law with no sanctions to defend it? No. The Constitution is not a league. It is a law. It is not only a law; it is the supreme law. They who violate this law are responsible as individuals for their crime. They cannot shelter themselves under a usurped authority, or the pretended regularity of conventional or legislative action which violates the Constitution. Such action is an unlawful exercise of authority, and unlawful authority is no authority. The parties to the war, then, are not States, but individuals, on the one part, and the Government on the other. It matters not for the argument how numerous these individuals may be. They are still individuals. If numerous enough to overthrow the common Government they effect a revolution. If not, they are baffled insurgents, guilty of treason.

Here let me pause for a moment to remark upon a subject by no means necessary to the consideration of the question we are upon, but from which you appear to derive considerable satisfaction. You say that Mr. Lincoln, twelve years ago, declared himself in favor of the doctrine of the right of revolution. This is urged for one of two purposes, either to disparage the President for mere selfish party ends, or as an apology for the insurrection. I am unwilling to impute to you the former motive. For the latter purpose it obviously amounts to nothing as an argument. But I must be allowed to say that your treatment of this subject displays a considerable want of fairness and of candor. The subject of Mr. Lincoln's discussion in the debate alluded to was the revolution of Mexico against Spain and of Texas against Mexico. Because Mr. Lincoln maintained the right of revolution against bad government, it does not follow that revolution or insurrection against a good one is justifiable. Besides, it is quite apparent that Mr. Lincoln's opinions in 1848 are quite aside from the merits of the present question. To justify the insurrection, or to apologize for it, you must show that they have undertaken it for justifiable reasons. This you do not attempt.

Nor do you advance a single step in your advocacy of rebellion when you refer to the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, the New England troubles of 1812-14, or the South Carolina Nullification of 1832. Discontent with measures of state is the fruitful parent of disorder. It has prevailed at times in all States. It has many times shaken governments to their foundations; sometimes overthrown them. But you cannot thence derive either a justification or an apology for the present rebellion. There existed no grievance which either justified or excused this *ultima ratio*,—the right of revolution. At the very time the conspiracy took form and substance, the question of

slavery or freedom in the Territories was a question entirely in the hands of the South and their Northern ally, the Democratic party. Combined they had a clear majority in Congress. They were in possession of the National Legislature. They were in possession of the National Court. What, then, had they to fear from the principles of the President? Nothing whatever. Nor was it fear which set them in motion. The election of Mr. Lincoln was, as is notorious, a circumstance anxiously expected and greedily seized upon by the conspirators to commence their work of "precipitation." The pretext was, alas, but too successful in the hands of the Cotton State politicians. From their secret conclaves in Washington they raised their false and hypocritical clamor of danger to the South, and propagated it by every art of deception and alarm. The cabal in South Carolina responded readily to their signal. The imbecility of President Buchanan, the collusion of several of his ministers, and the treachery of the Vice-President, were unfortunately propitious coincidents to their nefarious schemes. They were accomplished. The Southern people were successfully deceived, and were ruined by the representatives whom they had chosen to guard their rights! The man who plays the part of the mock-president at Richmond, at that time a Senator, with the oath of fealty to the Constitution yet fresh upon his tongue, was, as now appears by the letter of Senator Yulee, the principal conspirator of them all. Had he anything to gain by his treason? You shall decide.

It is in vain, therefore, that you strive to extenuate, upon the grounds you mention, the guilt of those who have made war upon the Government of their country. There are no doubt many sincere people at the South who support the rebellion. But they have been deceived, and in their deception is the only palliation of their course. That deception will as assuredly be exposed, as that truth will

triumph over falsehood, and time expose the contrivances of the wicked.

But the war for the Union and the Constitution, you say, cannot be successful, and you enumerate many difficulties, some of which, I admit, are great. Others are rapidly disappearing before the crowding events of the day. But there is one sentence in your letter which sweeps away all your theories: "The South," you say, "it would be strange indeed were it otherwise, will make peace, if it be honorable and fair, not following their programme and omitting disunion." No reasonable man can expect that that disposition, which you so confidently predict, will be extensively developed, until time has decided the strength of the contending parties. Until that has been done, and the leaders, who for selfish purposes, direct the storm, are driven from their positions of power and influence, there is nobody who can be treated with. When that is accomplished, one of the difficulties, and the greatest which you enumerate, viz., "the two governments, the Government at Washington and the government at Richmond," will be removed. There will then be as heretofore, but one Government and one people. When the Government is triumphant and the Constitution vindicated, the Southern people will enjoy all their constitutional rights. It is the fault of their false leaders if they are deprived of them now. Their betrayal lies at their own door, and not at that of the Government.

You charge upon the Republican party the present disasters of the country, and this, as I have already said, seems to be the key to your attack upon the Government, your opposition to the war for the Union and the Constitution, your undisguised enmity to the North, and your sympathy with Secession. It appears to me, that in a crisis like the present, the discussion of party politics should be laid aside, and our inquiries directed not so much to the consideration of who is to blame, as to the

means of maintaining the Constitution and putting down the rebellion against it. You are of a different opinion, and think that the cause of the country is to be best served by a return to the arts of political controversy and the renewal of partisan strife. If you would not have us sit upon the benches of the Circus, while the enemy is at the gates, you have no objection to a fight among ourselves in the arena. I do not design to follow you in this example. Yet justice to a great and powerful party, and the truth of history, render it not improper that I should call to your recollection a few forgotten facts. The beginning of the difficulty, by your own showing, was the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Who repealed that measure and set the country aflame? The truth of history compels me to answer,—the Democratic party of the North assisted by Southern votes. Who endeavored to force Slavery upon Kansas against the wishes of her people? A Democratic President. Who was the imbecile or willing nurse of Secession at its birth? A Democratic President. Who leads a brigade of traitors now? A Democratic Vice-President, who was also the nominee of a Democratic convention for the Presidency. Who sits in the mournful gloom of the palace of “the government at Richmond,” or

—“walks with uneasy steps
Over the burning marble?”

A Democratic Senator. Who has been in modern times the foster-mother of Slavery, yielding to all its imperious exactations and teaching it, that by long custom it had the right to rule, and that the Government was its rightful inheritance? The Democratic party. But I forbear.

The Republican party is neither an Abolition party or in the possession of Abolitionists. Its existence is of recent date. Its history, therefore, and the causes which forced it into being, are too well known to require repetition

here. Its leading principles, as I understand them, are, 1st. Constitutional justice to all the States, and non-interference in the Slave States. 2d. Prohibition of the extension of Slavery to free territory belonging to the United States. This last power they understand to be conferred upon Congress by the Constitution. The Breckinridge fragment of the Democratic party denied it; but when they appealed to the people, the verdict was against them, and they made war upon the people. It is in vain that the enemies of the Republican party attempt to pervert the truth of history, and to lay upon them the fault of the war. Excepting that the representative of their principles had been elevated by the people to the chief executive office, they were powerless at the moment of the war; for in Congress they were in a minority. The war was not made by slaveholders, and therefore, was not made by those whose chief interest it might seem to be (though really it was not) to oppose the Republican party. It was made by ambitious and unprincipled politicians, who deceived and betrayed the slaveholding interest into approval of a step the most insane and desperate that could have been taken.

Nor is it true, as you charge, that the Republican party are for the Union without the Constitution. They have no such silly creed. They maintain the Constitution—the whole Constitution—not perhaps as you understand it, nor in the manner in which your late candidate for the Presidency is now maintaining it, but as the fathers who made it understood it. They have never pretended to any right of interference whatever with the domestic institutions of the Slave States. On the contrary they have by word and act continually disclaimed it. The recent message of the President to Congress is but a fresh and reiterated avowal of the same principle. On the other hand, they find in the Constitution no warrant for planting the institution of Slavery by authority of law in the Territories of the United

States already free. They do find that the Constitution has delegated to Congress authority to make laws for the Territories belonging to the United States, and to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever over the District of Columbia, and all other places which are the property of the United States. Their principles are not aggressive: they are conservative. Their field of action is within the Constitution, not beyond it.

Your ingenious use of the vote upon the Holman resolution, which in your Letter you evidently consider your ace of trumps, proves nothing to the contrary. That resolution was voted down, not because the Republican party do not acquiesce in the principle which it embodies (for they have avowed that principle over and over again), but simply because it was regarded as a totally unnecessary declaration, an exhibition of weakness, and an ill-timed attempt to treat with traitors who were levying war against the Union, and who had repeatedly declared that they were in arms, not to compel a redress of grievances, but to set up an independent Government.

You must be aware that on the 24th January, 1861, the Republican* Legislature of your own State passed the following resolution, which was approved by a Republican Governor :

“Resolved, that the people of Pennsylvania entertain and “desire to cherish the most fraternal sentiments for their “brethren of other States, and are ready now, as they ever “have been, to co-operate in all measures needful for their “welfare, security, and happiness, and the full enjoyment of “all their rights under the Constitution which makes us “one people; that while they cannot surrender their love

* The Legislature was constituted as follows: Senate, 27 Republicans, 6 Democrats; House, 71 Republicans, 29 Democrats. Republican majority in Senate, 21; in the House, 42.

“of liberty, inherited from the founders of their State,
“sealed with the blood of the Revolution, and witnessed in
“the history of their legislation, and while they claim the
“observance of all their rights under the Constitution, they
“nevertheless maintain now, as they have ever done, the
“Constitutional rights of the people of the Slaveholding
“States, to the uninterrupted enjoyment of their own do-
“mestic institutions.”

The principles of this resolution are the principles of the Republican party. They have reiterated them on every important occasion, and no sophistry can place them in a different attitude.

Equally unfounded is your charge against the Administration, of a want of activity and vigor at the outset of the rebellion. In circumstances of embarrassment and equal peril no Administration in any country ever displayed more vigor combined with judicious discretion. At the first moment in which it acceded to power, it found upon its hands the war which the weakness and incompetency of Mr. Buchanan had left as a legacy to his country, when he retired from office. The public property had been seized, and the public law defied. Insurrection and disorder had developed into life with tropical rapidity during the last days of an Administration the most ignominious which any country ever beheld. Worst of all, the national spirit had been demoralized by an exhibition of weakness and vice unparalleled in the history of the country. Then for the first time was witnessed in our country the spectacle of a cabinet minister engaged in plundering its treasury, and arming its enemies, while another, abandoning his duties, publicly conspired with the traitors who were planning the overthrow of the Government. Shame and inability to cope with the flood of wickedness which surrounded him, had driven from his place the venerable and upright Secretary of State, while the President, like a

man in a dream, permitted the ship of state to drift helpless and rudderless to ruin.

Truly, if we were saved from the anarchy which seemed inevitable, it was owing to the goodness of Divine Providence, which interposed in our behalf. Such were the circumstances in which Mr. Lincoln found the country on the 4th of March, 1861. If any man shall say that he has not honestly and patriotically labored to restore the authority of the Constitution, and to redeem the country from the disorders in which he found it, he will say what is opposed to the truth of history.

Was ever a man placed in circumstances of so great difficulty and responsibility, and acquitted himself with more constancy and courage? Look back upon the May of 1861. What do you behold? The insurgents in possession of every Southern fort, in possession of the border States, our commerce at the mercy of rebel privateers, our capital besieged by traitors, our Government without soldiers, without arms, without ships, without money. Look again upon the May of 1862. You behold in the field an army of 700,000 men, well armed, well equipped, well disciplined; a line of armed ships from Cape Charles to the Rio Grande, the border States redeemed, Louisiana in our possession, every rebel port in our power, the traitors driven from Washington, driven from Missouri, driven from Kentucky, driven from Western Tennessee, driven from Northern and Western Virginia,* driven from Eastern Carolina, driven from Florida, and the rebellion driven to die in the lair in which it was hatched; our arms everywhere triumphant, our flag everywhere victorious, our credit unimpaired.

We have exchanged fear and doubt for courage and

* As my letter goes to you, the news comes that they fly from Yorktown and Corinth.

confidence, danger for security, rebel boastings for rebel despair, uncertainty abroad for friendly encouragement. This may not in your opinion be worth throwing up your hat for. To those whose hope it is to see the Federal Constitution maintained, and the nationality of our people preserved, it appears differently.

Is it nothing to have accomplished thus much? Is the man, under whose lead the people, rallying to their Government, have achieved these great results, to be charged by you with want of force, and his advisers with want of virtue? If you were the historian of the time, and if, like Mr. Allison, you were to decorate each chapter with high-sounding apothegms founded on the facts you relate, what a singular philosophy you would eliminate from a twelve months' narrative of the war!

But you say you see no signs of Union sentiment, or returning loyalty at the South. Nor did you see much of it in Missouri, before the enemy was driven out, or in Southern Kentucky, or in Tennessee. You did not even suspect it in New Orleans, until you read the correspondence between the Mayor and Commodore Farragut, when you learned by the written admission of the former that the old flag was received with every demonstration of joy, by a crowd of people, who were fired upon for it by the traitors who dared not face our sailors and marines. We are not to expect manifestations of Union sentiment, when it is understood that it is to be bought at such a price as it brought in New Orleans before its evacuation by General Lovel. Since he was driven out, we are told that a large meeting of Union citizens has been held, which was characterized by the most enthusiastic demonstrations of joy.

There are loyal men in the South, but it were in vain to expect them to give any sign under the terrors of conscription and martial law. The South is in a state of military bondage. Her loyal men would speak, but they dare not.

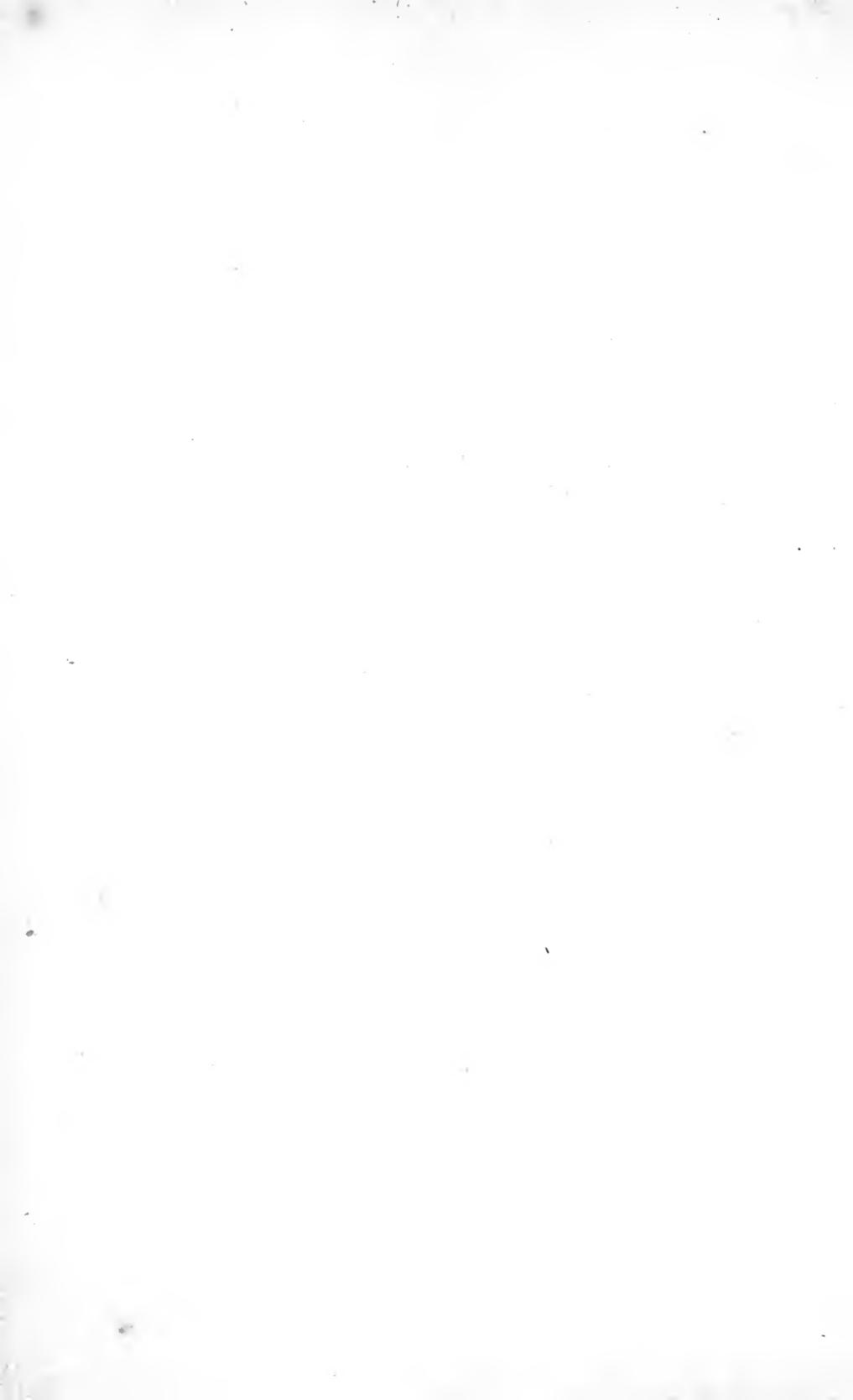
Relieve them from that bondage, drive out the armed traitors who oppress their liberties, and you will see whether there be not men in the South, as well as in the North, who prefer liberty to despotism, security to oppression, peace and plenty to fratricidal war and famine. When you have done that, then bring forward your terms of conciliation, and let them be most large and liberal. Let them be such as brothers should offer to brothers. Let them be full of kindness and generosity. The people of the North will then follow you in that direction as fast as you can run.

But the authority of the Constitution must be first restored. The armies of the insurgents must be first crushed. In this great work the President and the country are now engaged. The question is not now one of parties, but of self-preservation. It is a question of the continuance of constitutional liberty on this continent. It is a time to look forward, not backward. It is a time not to sow distrust and dissension, but to encourage confidence and union.

On which side of the great struggle do you stand? Will you stand by the country, or will you follow still the fortunes of the brigadier? Are you for the Union and the law, or for disunion and against the law? If for the former, do you aid them by raking up the embers of party strife, by seeking to disparage the Government, and by sympathizing with rebellion? If for the latter, would it not be the part of candor so to declare yourself? Would not the frankness of such a declaration be preferable to an ambiguous loyalty by as much as an open enemy is to be preferred to a secret foe?

PHILADELPHIA, May 5, 1862.





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